

Plans for new well in Bally will allow for borough growth

By Michelle Karas
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BALLY — Plans to remedy the borough's contaminated water are in motion.

"Now we need to fight harder than we've ever fought before to make sure we get what we want," Borough Manager Toni Hemerka said at a recent borough council meeting. "We deserve clean water."

Since the mid-February discovery of low levels of an industrial solvent in the borough's drinking water, consultants hired by the firm responsible for resolving the contamination have monitored the borough's water wells weekly and have conducted background research on a new well, she said.

"We don't have any answers yet. There is a lot of background work to be done," she said. "They're looking at the land and the geology. It will probably be two or three months until they can narrow the field."

American Household, the company that took over the site formerly occupied by Bally Case and Cooler, Bally Engineering Systems and Sunbeam Corp., is responsible for resolving the contamination of 1,4-dioxane, a probable carcinogen. The solvent got into the borough's groundwater along with other industrial solvents, which led to the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's creation of the Bally Groundwater Contamination Superfund Site in the 1980s.

"We are testing regularly for 1,4-dioxane and sending the samples to a certified lab in Georgia, all paid for by American Household,"

Hemerka said. "We are on top of it."

American Household plans to build a new well in a different location and pump its water to Bally. It is up to the borough to ensure that the new well is comparable to the existing well and will allow for growth in the area, not just provide the same amount of water that is currently used by the borough, Hemerka said.

While American Household works on a new well, borough residents have the option of receiving bottled water in lieu of drinking their tap water. At a recent public meeting on the water issue, an EPA toxicologist said water contaminated by 1,4-dioxane has a high long-term cancer risk when ingested, although it is safe to use for washing. She said residents may safely continue to drink the tap water for the six to 12 months it takes to implement a solution.

However, "you see a lot of Deer Park trucks in Bally lately," said Councilman Jim Finegan.

To date, more than 250 households in the small borough have signed up to receive bottled water supplied by American Household, according to Hemerka.

"I think it gives them a certain comfort level to know bottled water is available and that we're looking for a new well," she said.

Residents should be cautious of sales people selling home water treatment systems, Hemerka said. The borough recently refused a sales permit application submitted by Save All Home Treatment Systems.

According to Arcadis, the engineering firm consulting for American Household, the systems don't remove 1,4-dioxane for the

long-term, Hemerka said.

In a related matter, council unanimously approved the \$1,095 purchase of a check valve for a borough fire hydrant on Chestnut Street.

The hydrant is used by bulk water haulers to fill up their trucks. A check valve will give borough officials a more precise reading of how much water is being purchased to fill swimming pools — a use that will not be affected by the presence of 1,4-dioxane, officials said.

New software program could solve county space problem

By Sharon Stahl
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READING — Berks County commissioners are expected to approve a \$257,800 study that will furnish a master space plan for the county.

The county owns and manages 2 million square feet of space that it needs to keep track of and efficiently. The problem occurs when departments ask for space, move, then determine the new space doesn't fit their needs.

The study will determine what

similar services to be brought closer," said Scott Adams, director of facilities for Berks County.

The study will be done by Rosser International Inc. of Atlanta.

A software program that costs about \$400,000 could solve that problem once the master plan is complete. The program will allow the county to look two, five and 10 years down the road to plan and organize its space. It will also keep track of the square-feet used in each department.

"When we have a need for new services, the system will

Tim Reiver questioned where the county would see the savings.

"We move once and we're there for the long run," said Adams.

A number of departments have

moved and may need to move again depending on increased or decreased services and staffing.

"You can only manage what

you can see," said Adams.



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